

# Chondo-gyo Men Clash in Rite

*Free Times, Dec. 26, 1975*  
A clash broke out between two conflicting sects of Chondo-gyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way) during a ceremony Wednesday at the headquarter of the order in Chongno-gu, Seoul.

The two rival sects showed their hostility against each other during the Inil ceremony which celebrates the inauguration day of the order's founder Son Pyong-hi. During the ceremony in the auditorium of the headquarters building, the rival sects insisted on giving the memorial speech for the ceremony.

At the meeting, two factions among the congregation of 500 supporters of Patriarch Choe Tok-sin and supporters of the order's assembly chairman Kim Kwang-uk clashed for two hours till the police dispersed them.

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## Religion

## Korean Chondogyo

The following is the tenth in a series of articles dealing with various Christian denominations and other religions now in Korea. — Ed.

By Miss KAP-SON YIM

"Chondogyo," the religion of the heavenly way, was originated in Korea more than 100 years ago and is now one of the major religions in Korea. Its main philosophy is based on the beliefs of Buddhism and Confucianism. More than two-thirds of the believers of the Chondogyo are grown men.

The fundamental doctrine of the Chondogyo is that man is not only a representative of the heaven but also embodies in himself the element of heaven.

"In our religious life, we do not worship a special god, but persistently pursue the element of heaven existing in ourselves," Yong-chon Kim, a Chondogyo propagator, says.

"We do not believe in the existence of the future, either," Kim says. "By discovering heavenly ways in ourselves, we make our society the kingdom of heaven on earth."

The present number of the Chondogyo believers are estimated to be about 630,000 throughout the country, according to the Chondogyo Central Church authorities. The Central Chondogyo Church is located in Kyongundong, Chongno-gu, Seoul.

The total number of the churches is 90. Seoul has seven Chondogyo churches including the main central church. All the cities that have the provincial government offices, have Chondogyo churches.

The regular church ceremony is held every Sunday.

It starts at 11 o'clock in the morning and continues for about 40 minutes.

The ceremony usually includes reading the scriptures, singing psalms, hearing a sermon and "singo" which means relating the state of one's soul to heaven.

The psalm consists of about 30 songs. About half of the songs are the melodies of famous classical Korean music. The others are mostly compositions of the late Nampa Hong, a noted Korean musical composer.

Regarding individual religious acts, the Chondogyo believers recite the "chumun" which is a kind of prayer. It is composed of 20 words.

The chumun prayer is as follows: May the creative force of the universe be within me in abundance. May heaven be with me and all will be done. Never forget this truth, and you will become aware of all things.

At family rituals pure water is offered at nine o'clock every evening. Pure water is believed to be the source of all universal things and makes their mind as clean as pure water.

Their church contribution system is peculiar. Every Chondogyo believer collects a large spoon of uncooked rice at every meal. This accumulated rice is brought to church on the first Sunday of each month.

Currently the Chondogyo church is publishing two kinds of periodicals. The Saenggan (or the New Humanity) and the Kaebok Chongnyon (the Youth Pioneer) are issued every other month.

Chondogyo was founded in 1860 by Chaeu Choe. At that time Korea's political and social conditions were tumultuous.

This was during the declining rule of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910). At first this religion started as Donghak (the school of Oriental philosophy).

Western civilization began to surge into this country as Korea opened her ports to Japan and Western nations. Japan and the Western countries exploited this country politically and economically at that time.

Because of the political and social instability, people were ready to accept religion, whose slogan was, "Save yourself and save your country."

Donghak was at first considered an evil religion by the government and its founder Choe was executed. But it received positive support from many people. Its believers took the role of "pioneers" in the modernization of the nation relating to the kinds of cultures to be admitted into Korea.

The government continuously suppressed the Donghak believers. This led to the Donghak Revolt in 1894. The revolt was subdued by the intervention of China and Japan. This was the spark that started the Sino-Japanese war (1894-95).

When Korea was a colony of Japan, the then leader of the Donghak, Byonghi Son, reorganized the religion and the name Donghak, was changed to Chondogyo.

After the Japanese annexation of this country, the Chondogyo believers joined the anti-Japanese movement under the leadership of Byonghi Son. They were leaders of the 1919 Independence Movement.

Of the 33 patriots who signed the Declaration of Independence on March 1, 1919, 15 of them were Chondogyo believers.

During the Japanese rule the Chondogyo believers continued to keep the independence movement alive.

Chondogyo at that time had more than 3 million members.

However, after the 1945 liberation from Japan, the number of the Chondogyo believers decreased.

Church authorities attribute the decrease to "the failure to grow more able successors."

"But reflecting on our past mistakes of the people we are enhancing our efforts to propagate our religion,—that is, building a paradise on earth," Kim, the Chondogyo propagator, says.



SERVICE OF THE CHONDGYO — Members of the Chondogyo church attend a Sunday service held in the Chondogyo Central Church, which is located in Kyongundong, Chongno-gu, Seoul. The present number of the Chondogyo believers are estimated to be 630,000 throughout the country.